

REVIEWS

Native Plants for High-Elevation Western Gardens. By JANICE BUSCO and NANCY R. MORIN. 2003. Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado. 352 pp. Paperback \$29.95. ISBN 1-55591-475-6.

“The textured patchwork of plant communities as they spread, merge, and change tells us the story of our home: where the water flows, where the soils are heavy, where the wind and sun conspire to parch the land, where we have disturbed the earth, where cows and sheep have fed, where elk have stood. When we use native plants in natural combinations, they link us even more closely to our sense of place.”—Busco and Morin 2003

Few and far between are books written for landscaping and growing high elevation native gardens, and finally, here is a great one. Award-winning (Garden Globe Award of Achievement for Writing and a 2003 Southwestern Book of the Year), *Native Plants for High-Elevation Western Gardens* ably rises to the task.

Horticulturist, Jan Busco, elegantly and logically escorts her readership through the essential subjects: climate & its affects on plants and planting, consideration of conditions and available resources, site assessment, landscape plan preparation, planting and seeding techniques as well as monitoring plantings and keeping them well. These topics are succinctly and confidently addressed—clearly evidence of the author’s many years of horticultural experience. The ‘Plant Description’ section describes 150 or so herbaceous perennial species in which character, native range, blooming season, outstanding features, culture, and interesting (really!) detailed comments about use or cultivation of each species. High quality color images illustrate every species, making this book not only a lovely work of art, but one useful for field identification.

While the epicenter for this book is Flagstaff, Arizona, where all of the cultural trials were performed, the information is truly applicable to all of the mountainous western states (4000’–12,000’ elevations) in principal. And, while the species listed within the ‘Plant Description’ section might not be appropriate to introduce, for example, to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, in most cases, the cultural information provided for each genus, can be directly applied to help grow similar species native to other regions.

—MELANIE BAER-KEELEY, Restoration Horticulturist, Sequoia Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, CA 93271

Theodore Payne in His Own Words, a Voice for California Native Plants. Compiled and edited by ELIZABETH POMEROY. 2004. Many Moons Press, Pasadena, California. 224 pp. Paperback \$16.95. ISBN 0-9700481-5-7.

Theodore Payne arrived in southern California as a young man in the 1890’s, having been recently trained in horticulture in his homeland, England. Early on in his career here, he recognized the uniqueness and fragility of California’s native plants, making a lifelong commitment toward their protection and preservation. As a nurseryman, Payne grew and introduced 400–500 native species into gardens, becoming a noted expert at cultivating and propagating them. It is fortunate for us that he, so early on in southern California’s history, recognized how profoundly altered the wildness of this state would become.

Theodore Payne in His Own Words, a Voice for California Native Plants is a compilation of his writings from primarily 1890–1940. He chronicles his explorations, experiences, observations and career path throughout southern California. Colorful characters parade through the pages of this book as they did in his life, and combined with Payne’s orientation towards all things wild—especially plants—makes for very interesting reading. Having a glimpse of southern California as it was before the deluge of people and development is a rewarding, uncommon treat.

What also makes this book really interesting is Payne’s involvement with prominent botanists, horticulturists, and landscape architects of the day, along with details of several renowned projects. His associates are a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ in his profession, such as Frederick Law Olmstead, Ralph Cornell, Hugh Evans, Kate Sessions, Susanna Bixby Bryant, Dr. Carl Wolfe, and Dr. Francesco Franceschi. Payne’s influence on these people and others ultimately promoted further efforts toward conservation and education. For example, Theodore Payne inspired, designed, as well as propagated plants for two of the premier California native plant botanic gardens and research facilities—Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. And several of Payne’s other native landscapes—which he also designed and grew plants for—include Exposition Park, Cal Tech, and Descanso Gardens, Torrey Pines State Park, Pomona and Occidental College. His private landscapes were scattered widely through the San Fernando Valley in Pasadena, Hollywood and Beverly

Hills, and north to Ojai and Santa Barbara. Vestiges of many of Payne's original plantings still remain.

In his lifetime, Theodore Payne clearly demonstrated his commitment to "... promote, preserve and restore California native landscapes and habitats," as well as in a lifetime beyond with the establishment in 1960, of the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wildflowers and Native Plants. The publication of *Theodore Payne in His Own Words, a Voice for California Native Plants*, rightfully reminds and acknowledges such a deep and worthy dedication.

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California desert flowers: an introduction to families, genera, and species. By SIA MORHARDT and EMIL MORHARDT. 2004. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA. 284 pp. Hardcover \$65.00, Paperback \$29.95. ISBN 0-520-24003-0.

This wonderful book provides a great introduction to the desert flora of California for beginning botanists, and will be a useful tool for exposing nontraditional students to scientific classification and taxonomic keys. More experienced students of California's flora will also value this book as a complement to more technical works (Munz 1974; Hickman 1993). The layout and content are well chosen, and will interest a wide readership.

As the book is very photograph-driven, the coverage is primarily of the showiest species from twenty-four families found in the Mojavean and Sonoran regions. These photographs are outstanding, even breathtaking in places. Although the stated purpose of introducing California's desert flora is performed very well, these photographs clearly reveal the book's metafunction: an emotive tribute to the authors' very deep respect of our state's tremendous beauty. This duality makes for a very engrossing read: close shots of choice blossoms seduce the reader as they admirably illustrate diagnostic features. Other photographs carefully capture the unique landscapes of the region with genuine sensitivity—the images of long views across dry bolsons (e.g., *Euclide urens*, p. 188), scorched silver playas (*Lupinus magnificus*, p.146), and cloud-shaded paintbrushed plains (*Escholtzia californica*, p. 220) will resonate deeply with many readers.

The photographs are complemented by useful diagrammatic icons and illustrations which demonstrate diagnostic features. All of these appeared accurate as of my first read, with the (minor) exception of a palmately lobed leaf labeled as a palmately

compound leaf (p. 9). Additionally, well-written taxonomic keys lead the reader to the taxa treated in the book, either genera or species.

Some subtle editorial content provides levity, but shows a measure of internal dissonance: Broccoli is mentioned as "the vegetable that George Bush I refused to eat (p. 107)," whereas later, the authors echo similar distaste for okra (p. 202). Elsewhere, use of the phrase "more favorable circumstances (p. 1)" to describe non-desert regions continues the traditional depiction of deserts as somehow impoverished, inferior or more hostile relative to non-desert regions (cf. 'cismontane' and 'transmontane' California, two geographically biased terms); although this may be true for many species (including some humans), 'favorable' and 'unfavorable' are relative terms, dependent on each individual. As this is a book of desert-adapted flora, many of the plants depicted here are growing under the most favorable conditions possible. The authors are entitled to these opinions, however.

The book deserves praise for presenting very accurate diagnostic information in an accessible format, and for also presenting much other interesting and useful content, including ethnobotany, nomenclature, and ecology. One novel portion concerns the etymology of *Opuntia*, which the authors suggest may have come from the Tohono O'odham word for prickly pear fruits ("opun," p. 116); other authors maintain this taxon (adopted by Tournefort by 1700, authored by Linnaeus in 1753, but most often used *sensu* Miller, 1754) is traced from ancient works of Theophrastus and Pliny the Elder, both of whom mention a plant growing near Opus (Greece), called opuntia, which can 'sprout roots from the leaves' (Crook and Mottram 1995).

I have seen this book used by non-botanists to identify wildflowers to genus, and their opinion was very favorable. The Morhardts have produced a welcome addition for anyone interested in natural history of California, and one especially important for beginning botanists; professional botanists will welcome it as well.

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